

SB 202 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

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Meeting Dates: 4/17, 5/3

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Department of Human Services (DHS) to develop and administer voluntary placement program to support young adults between ages 18 and 21 who were previously in the care and custody of DHS to transition into adulthood by providing financial support, stable living situations, and other supports. Allows DHS to determine admission on case-by-case basis but requires consideration of young adults' readiness to transition out of protective services and whether voluntary placements are in their best interests. Specifies conditions of voluntary placement agreements. Requires juvenile court to make best interest determinations for placements lasting longer than 180 days and hold permanency hearings for placements lasting longer than 12 months. Requires DHS to adopt rules for implementation. Becomes operative January 1, 2024 but authorizes DHS to adopt rules and take necessary actions prior to operative date. Takes effect on 91st day following adjournment sine die.

REVENUE: *No revenue impact*

FISCAL: *Has minimal fiscal impact*

SENATE VOTE: *Ayes, 23; Nays, 5; Excused, 2*

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Characteristics of voluntary placement agreements
- Restrictions on activities of young people who are wards of the court
- Voluntary placement agreements available for minor children under 18
- Benefits available to young adults who experienced foster care
- Autonomy of young adults in care
- Process of transitioning to adulthood

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Department of Human Services' Independent Living Program (ILP) provides services to youth who have left, or are about to leave, foster care in order to promote a successful transition to adulthood. The ILP consists of five separate programs:

- Independent Living Skill-Building Program, which provides training and classes on developing skills necessary to live independently;
- ILP Discretionary funds, which provides direct funds to youth for purchasing items or services needed to live independently;
- Independent Living Housing Subsidy Program, which provides up to \$795 per month to assist with housing costs;
- Chafee Housing, which provides up to \$1,000 per month under the federal John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood; and
- Chafee Education and Training Grant, which provides up to \$5,000 to assist with higher education and training expenses.

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Youth must remain wards of the court in order to be eligible for ILP services through age 21, meaning that they must seek permission before traveling out of state, applying for a driver's license, getting married, or joining the armed forces. According to the [National Youth in Transition Database](#), 1,469 youth in Oregon received at least one independent living service. In addition to ILP, the state also provides enhanced benefits for former foster youth to pursue higher education, including eligibility for the Oregon Opportunity Grant and waivers of tuition and fees.

Oregon law (ORS 418.312) currently provides for voluntary placement agreements for children to be placed with child-caring agencies to receive certain services without transferring legal custody of the child to the department. That statute requires juvenile courts to review placements that last longer than 180 days and hold permanency hearings for placements longer than 12 months.

Senate Bill 202 A directs the Department of Human Services to develop and administer a voluntary placement program for adults age 18 to 21 who were previously in the care and custody of the department to facilitate transition to adulthood and independent living.